

California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup CHARTER

Mission

To improve the monitoring and assessment of wetland and riparian resources by developing a comprehensive wetland monitoring plan for California and increasing coordination and cooperation among local, state, and federal agencies, tribes, and non-governmental organizations. The workgroup will review technical and policy aspects of wetland monitoring tool development, implementation and use of data to improve wetland management in California.

Need for the CWMW

The need for comprehensive wetlands monitoring and assessment is articulated by the National Research Council's report on "Compensating for Wetland Losses under the Clean Water Act" (NRC 2001), which called for wetland managers to:

- conduct ambient monitoring and assessment;
- create adaptive and performance-based assessment tools to assist regulatory and management agencies;
- provide mechanisms to engage all regulatory programs via consistent approaches and tools;
- conduct assessment to provide a regional context for decision-making, including evaluation of cumulative impacts;
- develop a consistent approach to assess project performance; and
- provide a common framework and platform for data management and dissemination.

In California, no single agency has authority over aquatic resources. Regulation and management of wetlands and streams falls under the authority of six state and federal agencies. To add to this complexity, multiple programs within an agency may have authority or regulatory control over wetlands. A need exists to implement standardized monitoring and assessment tools and approaches within state and federal agencies in California. The resultant data can be used to better manage wetland and riparian resources, evaluate program efficacy, and facilitate improved coordination and communication within and between agencies.

Background and Description

The California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup (CWMW) evolved from a statewide steering committee formed to coordinate among agencies and advise on the development, implementation and routine use of standardized wetland and riparian monitoring tools. This assessment toolkit, standardized statewide, addresses the three tiered framework advocated by USEPA in their Elements Paper: Level 1-- habitat inventory and landscape tools, Level 2-- rapid, field-based assessments of condition, and Level 3-- intensive measures of condition. As state and federal agencies in California move toward implementation of the toolkit, improved coordination is needed to ensure smooth implementation and maximum utility of data collected.

The CWMW has been endorsed as a subcommittee of the California Water Quality Monitoring Council and will provide the mechanism for coordination and cooperation among state and federal agencies and data center management organizations involved in tool development and

implementation. The CWMW will also coordinate with the State Water Boards' Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP), as well as other related efforts, as necessary.

Membership and Representation

Representatives from state and federal agencies, as well as data center management organizations participate on the Workgroup. Meetings will be open, informal and consensus driven. The CWMW is lead by three chairs, one each from a state and federal agency and one from a participating data center management organization. Local agencies can be represented through participation in regional teams.

Scope and Objectives

The CWMW will provide feedback on comprehensive, watershed-based, and cross-programmatic monitoring and associated linkages with resource and regulatory programs involving the monitoring and assessment of wetlands and riparian areas. Objectives for the CWMW are listed below:

Objectives

- Develop a comprehensive wetland monitoring program for the State of California;
- Agree upon core wetland and riparian monitoring and assessment tools and methods;
- Compile information on existing wetland monitoring programs and activities;
- Communicate wetland monitoring information to agency staff and decision makers at the federal, state, and local levels; and
- Agree among partner agencies on data sharing.